

CHAPTER TWO (2)

GSP

GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT & ECONOMIC



COLONIZATION AND COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Scramble for and the Partition of Africa;

Colonialism in Nigeria;

Reason for Colonial Conquest

'Facets of Colonial Economy

Effect of Colonialism in Nigeria

The role of Trading Companies in the Colonial Process

The theory and Practice of British Administration in Nigeria

Neocolonialism in Nigeria

CHAPTER TWO (2)

COLONIZATION AND COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the process of colonization and colonial administration in Nigeria. It identifies and explains the factors that led to the scramble and subsequent partition of Africa by the European colonialists. The chapter also explains the role of the trading companies in the exploitation of the economy of Nigeria, with a final section on theory and practice of British administration in Nigeria.

2. The Scramble for and the Partition of Africa

It is difficult to discuss colonization without necessarily looking at the precursor to the colonial slavery of the African continent. Prior to the colonial invasion of Africa, there was a certain process that facilitated the subsequent colonization of the African countries. This process came to be referred to as the scramble and the division of Africa among the Great European powers. The slave trade period; the capitalist wars fought by the various European power and the geographical discoveries of the European explorers all paved way for the scramble and partition of Africa. All these processers are clearly related and

relevant in understanding the process of exploitation and domination of African economies. Colonialism is a stage in the imperialist domination of Africa. Slavery is also another facet of imperialist exploitation. Although slave trade existed in Africa far before the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the extent, magnitude and severity of the European slave trade is incomparable in world history. Quite a number of scholars have written on this period and its impact on African political history. The trade in African human cargo and the enslavement of the sections of African population was begun by Portugal in about middle of the 15th century (Offiong: 1980). Offiong further argued that:

It was the Portuguese who introduced the Atlantic slave trade in the early 16th century when the discovery of the New World created demand for more workers. Not long after this, the Spanish, French, Genoese, Dutch and, after 1560, the English also joined the trade and merchants from Liverpool were involved. The Portuguese were mainly responsible for setting up a string of fortified trading factories along the West Coast from Cape Verde to the Congo by the time the famous *Vasco da Gama* had sailed around the Cape in 1497 (1980:85).

This perfectly established the framework for a triangular trade whereby England, France and colonial America supplied the exports and the ships; while Africa provided the human merchandise; the colonial plantations and raw materials. In fact, the slave ships sailed from the European countries with cargoes of manufactured goods. These were exchanged at a profit on the west coast of Africa for black slaves (1980:85).

During this period, the African continent supplied labour for the plantations in Southern Portugal and for the Spanish mines, and for domestic service in these countries and in France and England. But with the discovery of the Americans whose greatest need was for strong labour familiar to the ways of mining and agriculture, the special function of Africa as a supplier was firmly established (Offiong: 1980; 97).

There is no doubt that this cruel business devastated the African continent with the attendant consequences, which led to the depopulation of the continent. The process also stripped Africa of its most able-bodied and productive young men, who could have contributed to the launching of Africa into a global giant. This is more aptly captured by Offiong (1980) thus:

The application here is that between the 15th and the 19th century the African continent lost, in enslaved and killed, between 65 and 75

million people, and these were the most vital part of population (1980: 91).

Another implication is that is also led to the destruction of the basic economic gains achieved by the African people. On the other hand, the slave trade business greatly accelerated the development of Europe and the Americans. In fact, it constitutes a central feature of the process of the primitive accumulation of capital and a basic component of the history of capitalism, especially American capitalism. In addition, the impact of slave trade led to incessant wars and conflicts among the various independent and hitherto stable African communities.

There is no doubt that another process that greatly facilitated the subsequent conquest and colonization of African continent has to do with the activities of European explorers and “discoverers”. Many of the explorers such as *Mungo Park*, *the Lander brother*, *De Brazza*, *Stanley* and *Vasco da Gama*, etc. were commissioned by the various European powers to venture into and discover Africa. However, this discovery was essentially aimed at discovering the resources endowments of the African countries.

In fact, Ikime (???) contends that the work of the explorers was crucial in linking the new trade in palm produce, which was eventually adopted by the natives,

after the abolition of slave-trade and the activities of the missionaries. In effect, the European explorers greatly facilitated the process of discovery that paved way for the eventual partition of the African continent.

The European wars and conflicts also created a situation whereby the European countries were competing among themselves for the control and subordination of African countries to the caprices of Western imperialism. Consequently, the **Berlin conference of 1884 - 1885**, was a culmination of all these processes. In fact, the Berlin conference was considered as a peaceful means of sharing African countries without much political bickering, and this also set the framework for the final control and domination of African societies by the European powers.

3. COLONIALISM IN NIGERIA

¹Colonialism is the conquest and incorporation of weaker societies by the stronger nation into the capitalist economy. ²Colonization is the domination and imposition of one foreign rule over a nation by an external power. ³It is the subjugation and domination of one political entity by a stronger one, over the political, economic, and socio-cultural life of those colonized, usually through the use of force (Ibrahim: 1987). Colonial period in Africa started from the end of the slave trade to the era of independence. Colonial powers in Africa were ¹Britain, ²France, ³Portugal, ⁴Italy, ⁵Germany, ⁶Spain and ⁷Belgium.

In addition, the colonial expansion of the 17th to 19th centuries are of great relevance in world history because, for the first time in human history, colonial expansion became phenomenal in that it affected more than 2/3 of the world population. It brought about significant changes in the lives of about more than hundred and fifty (150) million people.

4. REASON FOR COLONIAL CONQUEST

Many reasons have been given to explain colonialism in Africa including Nigeria. A particular school of thought claimed that African societies were colonized in order to liberate them from barbarism. This is the idea of the white man's burden which essentially argued that the mission of the white man was humanitarian in the sense that the continent of Africa needed to be liberated from the shackles of poverty, diseases, ignorance, cultural backwardness and religious barbarism (Buba, et al: 1989). The mission of the white men then was, therefore, triggered by the desire to preach mission of civilization and to liberate the "backward African societies" from their problems of underdevelopment. However, historical records and documents of the atrocities committed by colonialists prove this claim otherwise. Similarly, history has also shown that African societies had lived peacefully and comfortably even before the colonial conquest, and,

on the contrary, colonialism disrupted the pattern of development in many places in Africa.

On the other hand, the only salient factor advanced for colonial conquest is economic, which is strongly advocated by the Marxist and Neo-Marxist school of thought. This school contends that colonialism is a stage in imperialism. Colonial conquest is therefore explained in terms of the crisis of capitalism in Europe. This crisis was primarily that of poor production and under consumption in the western European contrast, particularly during the period of the industrial revolution, which was characterized by massive production of goods and the intense competition between and among the European countries. In other words, there was surplus production of goods in Europe but there was no corresponding demand for them because the large sections of the consumers were poor and could not afford to purchase those goods that were overproduced. Therefore, the only alternative left for the producers was to look for secured and protected outlets for the sale of their surplus manufactured goods and where they could reinvest their surplus capital. These outlets also reduced the level of economic competition among the western European countries. Eventually Nigeria fell under British colonial rule. From then onwards, Nigeria became not only the dumping ground and market for British manufactured goods but also the main source of raw materials required

for British industries. Against this background, colonialism was therefore obviously an inevitable end result of European economic imperialism. And as Lenin correctly point out, “colonialism is the highest stage of imperialism”.

5. FACETS OF COLONIAL ECONOMY

The colonization of Nigeria was the exploitation types with strong military aggression to ensure compliance by the natives. This, during the colonial period, the exploitation of the Nigerian economy manifested itself in the various facets of economy. **One of the most important sector in which the colonialist placed much emphasis was *agriculture*.** Prior to colonial contact, Nigerians were producing both food and cash crops in small quantities for both commercial purposes. However, with the arrival of the British colonial masters, Nigerians were encouraged to cultivate cash crops in commercial quantities for export to Britain. This led to the neglect of the production of food crops thereby rendering stagnant the agricultural sector. The exported cash crop were processed into finished goods and then sent back to feed the **Lancashire Textile Industries in London.** In fact, **the British divided Nigerian into three agricultural zones** for the effective production of these cash crops. **The North** became famous in the cultivation of *cotton*, *groundnut*, *shea butter* and *hides and skin*; the West

emphasized the production of *cocoa*, *rubber* and *timber* while **the East** concentrated on the cultivation of *oil palm* and *kernel*.

Having discovered that Africa was endowed with abundant natural resources, the colonialists encourage the extraction of these minerals in large quantities for onward shipment to Britain. Consequently, many Nigerians were forcefully conscripted to extract extreme and miserable conditions of work. For instance, colonial laws were promulgated which extended all the mineral rights in Northern Nigerian to the British trading company known as the **United African Company (UAC)** alone. Hence, this company and many others in the southern part of the country succeeded in exploiting all the mineral resources in Nigeria, which helped to facilitate the development of British industries at the expense of the indigenous industries in Nigeria.

Apart from mining, taxation was also introduced as an effective instrument of exploitation of Nigerians. Various kinds of taxes were made obligatory on Nigerians and these had to be paid in cash. In the process, the traditional indigenous exchange system of barter of currencies such as *cowries*, *manilas* etc. which had existed from time immemorial were abolished and replaced with *coins* and *paper currencie*. Consequently, as Ibrahim (1987) pointed out, the trick was that:

¹Before the African could pay his tax, he must first of all obtain the money by working in one way or the other for the white man who possessed the money. ²Secondly, taxation contributed mainly to the requisite fund to cover the administrative cost of the colony. ³Thirdly, taxation created a situation whereby the Nigerian peasants had to go into the required cash crop farming in order to get the money to pay their taxes (1987: 7).

In the area of commerce and trade, British colonialists have succeeded in establishing Marketing Boards, Banks and other financial institutions which helped in facilitating the process of exploitation in Nigeria. British goods or European goods were massively imported and sold to Nigerians on highly exorbitant rates under trade conditions that were greatly unequal and generally dominated by giant European companies like **SCOA, Unilever, UAC** etc. Most of the huge profits, mostly untaxed, generated by these companies were not usually invested in Nigeria but repatriated to Britain as surplus. The banks were initially established to facilitate financial transactions among European businessmen. However, they provided the channels through which the money exploited from Nigeria was siphoned to Europe.

Similarly, the provision of the basic social infrastructure was equally lopsided, in that these facilities were only provided to help in the domination of Nigerians during the colonial period. Most of the communication, transportation, health and educational facilities were not provided for the convenience and the benefits of Nigerians, but only to facilitate the evacuation of goods from the hinterland to the coasts, for onward shipment to Europe. Therefore, a look at the communication network map in Nigeria will reveal this exploitative pattern whereby most of the railways and roads only link up one agricultural or mineral producing area to another, in stark disregard of the felt need of Nigerians for these facilities. The Educational System only concentrated on the basic elementary education in literary and numeracy to help facilitate the development of the colonial bureaucracy for the continued exploitation of Nigerian resources.

In the final analysis, colonial economic activities led to the undue exploitation and impoverishment of Nigeria, and also to the stagnation in the pattern of economic growth and development.

6. EFFECT OF COLONIALISM IN NIGERIA

There are many effects of colonialism that include political, economic and socio-cultural, etc. Politically, colonialism introduced alien political institutions and

structures in Nigeria such as the adoption of the British parliamentary system of government. Similarly, our economy was fully integrated and incorporated into the Western capitalist system. Likewise, colonialism led to the retardation of our cultural values and systems, particularly those aspects of our cultures that were not appealing to the colonialists were destroyed and replaced with the white man's culture. Again, Nigerians were brainwashed to believe and accept the white man as naturally superior while the black was considered as an inferior, in any sense. This effectively destroyed the reasoning faculty of Nigerians and led to what is now referred to as colonial mentality, i.e. English, which has effectively tied us to our former colonial masters.

7. THE ROLE OF TRADING COMPANIES IN THE COLONIAL PROCESS

The colonial trading companies trading seriously undermined the growth of the various sectors of the Nigerian economy. Their activities led to the extraction of surplus profits from Nigeria and the subsequent stagnation of the most vital sectors of the economy. Colonial trading companies had existed in Nigeria, even prior to the effective colonization. In fact, their involvement in the Nigerian society facilitated the process of the conquest and the eventual colonization of the administration of Nigeria. Initially, these companies entered into

agreements and treaties with various traditional rulers for the control of the productive forces in the economy. It is observed that these trading companies had played a leading role during the period of the slave trade, and continued to do so during the colonial rule and even in the post-colonial history of Nigeria. They helped in facilitating the trade in human cargoes accelerated the transfer of profits and surplus in the commercial Trade in human merchandise.

During the colonial period most of the colonial protectorates were ended and administrated by these colonial trading companies on behalf of their colonial countries, in order to be among other things, protect trading and commercial interests against both internal and external threats.

For example, the **United Company** and **Royal Nigeria Company** became the major corporate companies that controlled all the economic resources as well as the movement of goods and services in the Southern protectorate. Crowder (1968) succinctly captured the manner through which these companies operated. He urges thus:

The company (i.e., the Royal Niger Company) set up a rudimentary administration over its territories and a string of trading posts on the Niger. It set up a High Court at Asaba backed

up by a constabulary consisting of three European officer and 150 African Men (Crowder: 1968:117).

It is through this process that the company was able to ensure effective control over these territories, maintaining its monopoly of trade over other rivals and securing profits for its shareholders. Other companies operated in a similar manner for the same objectives in their areas of jurisdiction.

On the other hand, some of the Nigerian communal leaders and traditional rulers, who resisted every attempt to subdue their communities under the various treaties signed with these companies, were forcefully sent to exile to other foreign lands. This situation was more prevalent in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. A good example is the case of **Jaja of Opobo**. However, the involvement of these trading companies in Nigerian economy during the pre-colonial and the colonial period greatly accelerated and entrenched the dependency of our economic sector on the capitalist system of the West. Likewise, this development led to the stagnation of the productive sectors of the economy to the vagaries of the imperialist and worldwide dominant capitalist economy. This situation still persists today.

8. THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

Formal British colonial administration in Nigeria did not start until around **1861** with the annexation of Lagos in **1860**. This brought about the Lagos colony. However, the process of bringing Nigeria together as an entity was achieved through a prolonged transformation process, which started with the proclamation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in **1885**, the Niger Coast Protectorate in **1893**, and the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria in **1899**.

In 1906 the Lagos colony was merged with the Southern Protectorate and in **1914**, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were joined together to become Nigeria in a process widely referred as Amalgamation with Lord Lugard as the first colonial Governor of the country.

With the Amalgamation process concluded Nigeria was firmly placed under a system of administration known as the indirect rule. For this system to work, the British used the traditional rulers in the North and a group emerging local administration in the South. However, indirect rule was first practiced in India and Tanzania. Indirect rule is variously defined as a system in which the colonized people were governed through their existing traditional institutions and traditional authorities. Therefore, under this system the British made use of the existing traditional

institutions to administer the Nigerian colony. In fact, indirect rule made the local chiefs the focal point of administration and gave rise to the concept of indirect rule and evolution of Native administrations (Okafor: 1981: 5). The major exponents of the indirect rule system in British territories were **Lord Lugard** and **George Goldie**. Quite a number of factors have been identified to explain the adoption of indirect rule in British colonies. However, for the sake of this course the following reasons are advanced:

- a).** The success of the system in British colonial India and Tanzania convinced the colonial administrators that it was viable administrative strategy.
- b).** The shortage of colonialist manpower is necessary for the British to rule through existing traditional institutions.
- c).** The colonialist also claimed rule was adopted in order to preserve the dignity of the traditional rulers and the emerging civil leaders in the eyes of their subject;
- d).** Indirect rule was considered cheap to operate because it requires minimum resources to finance the colonial bureaucracy; and
- e).** The unquestionable loyalty and support of the traditional rulers and the subrogation leaders to the colonialists made indirect rule possible.

The indirect rule system of administration was centralized and hierarchical in nature and the local chiefs and leaders were used as instrument of authority when it actual sense the colonial masters were in full control of the administration. The province and districts were created to facilitate the administration of the various protectorates with specific officers assigned to oversee and direct the affairs of the areas. The structure of indirect rule system had the crown, the British parliament and the colonial secretary all based in London where major policies are initiated and formulated in respect of the administration of the various colonies. At the level of the Nigerian colony, the Governor General is the representative of the Queen in Nigeria and at the same time the head of the Nigerian colony. The Lt. Governors headed the protectorates and the **Residents Officers** were in charge of the provinces; while **District Officers (D.Os.)** with their assistants (**A.D.Os**) administered the district areas. The Emirs, Obas and Obis, or elevated leaders as the case may be, were at the lower ladder of Authority and administration.

It is important to observe that the existence of an effective system and well-centralized administrative and judicial system made the operation of the system successful in the North. This was later extended to the East and West with minimal success. Although the colonialists made attempts to create ‘warrant chiefs’ to replace the existence of a

stateless society in the East, this was stoutly resisted and rejected by the natives.

In the final analysis, indirect rules succeeded in further entrenching authoritarian tendencies in the system of administration in Nigeria, since the system retained and developed the structure of traditional authority which oppresses the subjects or citizens of the state. Similarly, it also facilitated the exploitation and repatriation of surplus from the Nigerian economy.

9. NEOCOLONIALISM IN NIGERIA

The end of colonial rule also led to the emergence of another process of indirect domination. When independence was finally granted to African countries particularly in the late **1950s** and **early 1960s**, many of the newly independent countries celebrated their newly won freedom. However, it was not yet “*uhuru*” as a new form of domination set in through the use of indigenous people who eventually assumed the mantle of leadership in the newly independent countries.

Yahaya (1994) aptly captured the neocolonial conditions in many African societies. He maintains that:

“It was quite clear from the late 1940s that the system of colonial style of control for the colonies could not be maintained. The European powers had to devise new means of honourable disengagement from the colonies

but ensuring at the same time they did not loose out completely the process of retaining these privileges so as to maintain the capitalist control is what led to the new policies of domination called Neo-colonialism. The advantage to the former colonial power of having neo-colonialist relationship is that is has no responsibility at all, if anything went wrong (1994:3).”

It is against this background that, it can be rightly argued that Neo-colonialism is equally destructive, in that it is the process of handing over independence to the African people with one hand, only to take it over with other hand (Offiong: 1980; 122). This was responsible for the control of the major economic and political decisions by the meanwhile colonial powers. This new phase and pattern of dependence and domination is believed to have firmly taken root immediately after the end of the Second World War. In effect, this process started with stabilization of international credit system through the establishment of money lending institutions. Some of these institutions are the **World Bank** and **IMF**, and their subsidiaries whose activities during the post independent period continue to perpetuate the conditions necessary for dependency and underdevelopment (Buba et al, 1989: 22). Other manifestations of neocolonialism are seen in the predominant role in the activities of the multinational

corporation in the Third World Economics. Furthermore, the continued flow of bilateral and multilateral aid into the former colonial territories also undermines the economic growth of these countries. Similarly, the penetration of trade unions, organized coup d'états or even sponsoring of military interventions and establishment of military bases and military alliances or treaties have been used to promote the cause of (neo)colonialism. Other techniques include the use of wrong information through the media agencies such as radio, television and newspapers and other media of sociological propaganda, including films, evangelism, language courses, friendship societies or cultural institutes such as the Alliance Francais.

It is the common belief that neo-colonialism has once again made slaves of African nations, especially from the debts these African countries are allegedly owing the colonial masters and their allies. This point was aptly described by a Nigerian singer, **Sonoy Okosun (1981)**, in the following statements:

**“How can we all live in this shame;
Pull the shackles off your body,
Put the chains in your mind?”**

In other words, a sort of mental imprisonment continues to tie the economy of these countries, including Nigeria. Use of the colonial masters and their allies, well emerged where a colonial master and its allies form the centre and

the African country such as Nigeria constitutes the periphery that is destined to produce raw materials to support the economic growth of the centre. The centre also controls the political situation in the periphery.

In short, neocolonialism is manifested and sustained a process of manipulating the economic and political destinies of the former colonial territories by the erstwhile colonial powers, using contemporary global institutions and structures, the activities of the multinational corporations, foreign aid and indebtedness. Other are the installation, support and propping of stooges in government and even the instigation of conflicts and establishment of military bases in order to protect their neocolonial selfish ambitions and designs.

The Nigerian leader that leaked this control to the whole world was **General Murtala Muhammad**, over the Angolan Independence. The **USA** wanted the **UNITA** controlled by **Mr. Savimbi** to rule independent Angola, whereas majority of **Angolans** wanted the **MPLA**. The **USA** instructed all African countries gathered for a conference by a circular letter, to endorse **UNITA**. However, **General Murtala Muhammad** read the content of the letter at the conference and urged the leader to ignore it and endorse what the majority of Angolans wanted